

21 September 1984

SALVADORAN PRESIDENT SAYS U.S. RUNNING WAR STRATEGY

BY W. DALE NELSON

WASHINGTON

Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte says the priorities in his country's war against leftist guerrillas are being "decided by the Americans and not by us" because of the conditions attached to U.S. aid.

In an interview in the November issue of Playboy magazine, to be on newsstands Monday, Duarte also said that both civilians and members of the military are involved in right-wing "death squads" operating mostly in small Salvadoran towns.

Congress approved \$196 million in military aid for El Salvador during the current fiscal year, \$81 million in fiscal 1983 and \$55 million in fiscal 1982. The Reagan administration is seeking \$132 million for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

In doing so, lawmakers have imposed a variety of conditions on different portions of the aid. In general, they have required that the Salvadoran government make progress in such areas as land reform and the elimination of the death squads, blamed for thousands of political killings.

Galley proofs of the Duarte interview and a photocopy of the article as it will appear in Playboy were distributed to reporters by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a private group that has been critical of Reagan administration policies in Central America.

Lawrence Birns, executive director of the council, said the organization did not obtain its copy of the article from Playboy. Duarte was interviewed by journalists Marc Cooper and Greg Goldin, described by the magazine as specialists in Central American affairs.

Duarte was asked whether U.S. military advisers tell Salvadorans "how to run the war."

"This is the problem, no?" he replied. "The root of this problem is that the aid is given under such conditions that its use is really decided by the Americans and not by us. Decisions like how many planes or helicopters we buy, how we spend our money, how many trucks we need, how many bullets and of what caliber, how many pairs of boots and where our priorities should be _ all of that."

"It is decided by the ones who give the money," he said. "And all of the money is spent over there. We never even see a penny of it, because everything arrives here (in El Salvador) already paid for."

Asked about the death squads, the Salvadoran president said, "Of course they exist, and we have to work to get rid of them." He said that "the majority of killings have taken place in small towns of the countryside."

"And if you go to any of those towns to investigate, you'll see that there is a group of people, both civilians and military, who control the town. They control the property, the stores, the pharmacy, the church, the political parties, the mayor's office _ everything," he said.

Continued